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CARRIER AIR GROUP FIVE
FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

CVG5/A16-3/(jds)
Serial 073-50

30 October 1950

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Commander Carrier Air Group FVIE
To: Commander Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN
Via: (1) Commanding Officer, U.S.S. VALLEY FORGE (CV-45)
(2) Commander Carrier Division THREE

Subj: Close Air Support in Korean Theater

Encl: (1) Statement of Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FIFTY-ONE
(2) Statement of Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FIFTY-TWO
(3) Statement of Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FIFTY-THREE
(4) Statement of Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FIFTY-FOUR
(5) Statement of Commanding Officer, Attack Squadron FIFTY-FIVE

1. In compliance with the verbal request of Commander Task Force 77 the following comments and recommendations concerning Close Air Support in the Korean campaign is submitted. These comments are based upon personal observation, discussion with pilots, liaison officer, and the statements of the squadron commanders of the Air Group.

2. (a) Air Support in the Pusan Beach-head

Close Air Support in the southeast sector of Korea was provided by Air Group FIVE on the following dates: 26, 28, and 29 July, 5, 6, 9, 16 and 26 August, and 1, 2 and 3 September.

Most of the occasions on which actual Close Air Support was performed was under a high degree of urgency, which demanded a maximum effort of all forces available to prevent complete loss of our beach-head in Korea. Unfortunately, Naval air close support was not employed to a very high degree of effectiveness for the following reasons:

(1) Communications were chiefly responsible for lack of effectiveness. All aircraft were required to report in to the Joint Operations Center which was located first at Taegu, then moved to Pusan and later returned to Taegu. The radio equipment provided the JOC was always so restricted in range that Naval Aircraft invariably had to fly within a mile or two of the station to achieve satisfactory reception. This caused flights to go considerably out of their way and lose time on station. After reporting in to JOC the flight would be assigned a sector of the front and a controller to report to. On all too many occasions the controller to which the flight was ordered to report would be just returning to base, engaged in handling F60's or F51's or be on some other VHF channel conferring

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with a ground control party. In addition to these difficulties, the Air Force employed 4 channel VHF equipment which might have provided a suitable number of frequencies for normal Air Force use but, when both Air Force and Navy responded to a plea for maximum air effort, the available channels became so crowded that communications often broke down entirely.

(2) Grid Charts. Adding to the overall difficulty was the lack of common grid charts between Army, Air Force and Navy. The charts in use by the carrier pilots at this time were the World Aeronautical Chart series. This required explanation by the Navy pilots, shift by the controller to Latitude - Longitude coordinates, and a consequent loss of time and an added burden to already strained communication channels. Multiple place-names, all difficult to pronounce, contributed to this problem.

(3) Liaison - On two occasions a system employing direct liaison between the Carrier Task Force and JOC, together with air controllers furnished from the carriers, was instituted. These measures aided greatly in improving effectiveness of Naval air close support. On both these occasions, however, the system was discontinued after a short period when the ground forces emergency had apparently subsided. When in effect, the work of the liaison officers and the Navy controllers was hampered by the slow and undependable communications between JOC and the Carrier Task Force and the non-availability of 115/145 Octane gasoline at Taegu and Pusan.

(b) Air Support in the Inchon Invasion.

During the Amphibious Operation at Inchon close air support was furnished during the period 12 September 1950 to 30 September 1950. During this period Naval close air support was considered very effective. There were good reasons for this effectiveness. The Air Group was now working with the same Tactical Air Control Squadron with which it had trained before deploying forward. The same systems of reporting in, orbitting, marking targets and designation of targets with which the pilots were familiar were employed. Radio channels were assigned so that although a tremendous volume of traffic was handled, no individual frequency was over-burdened. Good grid charts were provided and were available in both single chart form or in the form of booklets of small charts. In addition, rapid reliable communications between the carrier and the Tactical Air Direction Center was available.

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(c) Discussion. It now seems apparent that all carriers deployed overseas should be prepared to perform close air support, at least during the early stages of hostilities. No other operation in which the Navy engages requires such a high degree of coordination of effort and teamwork as properly performed air support. To depend upon another service to provide the Tactical Air Controller and Ground Controller to direct Naval Aircraft is comparable to sending a football team into an important game with a borrowed backfield. No degree of standardization is going to achieve the degree of integration desirable and obtainable by controlling Naval aircraft with Naval personnel.

Although many phases of the Naval airground support furnished in the Pusan beachhead period of the Korean campaign showed need for improvement, it should not be construed that the overall result was ineffective. On the contrary, there were many indications of the tremendous assistance furnished by Naval aircraft to the ground forces. Time and again the enthusiasm for results achieved was expressed by the Tactical Air Controllers and Ground Controllers. The heavy ordnance loads carried by the Corsairs and Skyraiders was always welcomed heartily. As one Air Controller put it, reporting to his ground counterpart on the front lines, "I'm coming over with a bunch of Navy planes and, Brother, they're really loaded." On another occasion the Navy liaison pilots at Taegu heard everywhere the glowing praise of the Navy pilot who had wiped out a complete company of enemy troops by tossing a Napalm bomb into the mouth of the tunnel in which they had sought refuge. Navy liaison officers at Taegu in August heard the results of POW interrogation at the J.O.C. To the question "What U.S. weapon do you fear the most?", the POW's were unanimous in answering, "the blue airplanes".

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Tactical Air Control Squadrons be required to furnish readily deployable "splinter units" equipped with mobile communication equipment and be prepared to control carrier aircraft in close support wherever and whenever required.

2. That more joint exercises in which Naval aircraft support ground forces be scheduled for peacetime training.

3. That a standard grid system be used in all branches of the service.

4. That all pilots be afforded an opportunity to spend 2-4 weeks with an Army Division on a field problem to obtain a familiarity with the equipment and methods employed by Army ground forces.

H. P. LANHAM

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PART III (Cont'd)

(Enclosre (1) to CAG-5
Conf. ser 073-50)

United States Pacific Fleet
Air Force
FIGHTER SQUADRON FIFTY-ONE
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

FvF-51/A16-3:ac
Serial: 366-50
26 October 1950

From: Commanding Officer
To: Commander Carrier Air Group FIVE

Subj: Close air support; information concerning

Ref: (a) CAG-5 memo dtd 21 Oct 1950

1. In accordance with reference (a), the following information concerning the effectiveness, or lack of effectiveness of close air support as accomplished in the Korean Theatre, is hereby submitted as requested.

2. Although flights were scheduled with the primary mission of providing close air support to the ground forces in the Pusan beach-head, only one division was subsequently utilized. In all other cases, flights scheduled for air support were directed to secondary missions of interdiction or armed reconnaissance. The division which furnished close support was of the opinion that there were insufficient air coordinators to efficiently utilize aircraft available, and further, that insufficient VHF radio channels were provided. No close air support missions were scheduled or flown in the Inchon beach-head.

A.D. POLLOCK

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PART III (Cont'd)
(Enclosure (2) to CAG-5
Conf. ser 073-50)

United States Pacific Fleet
Air Force
FIGHTER SQUADRON FIFTY TWO

22 October 1950

MEMORANDUM

From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FIFTY TWO
To: Commander Carrier Air Group FIVE

Subj: Note on Air Support

1. Fighter Squadron FIFTY TWO had no assigned close air support missions subsequent to the Inchon landings and as a result can not qualify any comments comparing the close air support effectiveness after Inchon to that rendered in the Taegu beach head.

2. The few close air support missions flown by this squadron indicated a lack of sufficient control units and a faulty communication set-up. Closer liaison would permit assigning strike groups directly to control units.

W.E. LAMB

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Air Force
FIGHTER SQUADRON FIFTY-THREE
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

VF53/JMM:er
A2-11(2)
25 October 1950

MEMORANDUM

From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FIFTY THREE
To: Commander Carrier Air Group FIVE

Subj: Close Air Support; comments concerning

1. The following comments and discussion of Close Air Support as experienced by Fighter Squadron FIFTY THREE during the Pusan and Inchon beachheads are submitted herein:

a. Factors favorably affecting operations at Pusan:

(1) The most important attribute was the constant surveillance of ground targets by controllers which guaranteed complete coverage of the target area. The presence of controllers so familiar with the area aided tremendously in identification of targets and the front lines.

(2) The use of smoke rockets employed at a later date by our own Valley Forge TAC's speeded up identification of targets. During later flights over the Pusan beachhead target assignment was more accurately identified by the use of various colored smoke rockets fired by the ground artillery which positively outlined the area of support.

(3) Coordinated attacks by use of ground controllers in the target area and in direct communication with the aircraft definitely increased the overall effectiveness. It is suggested that this technique be employed for effective close support missions.

b. Factors unfavorably affecting operations at Pusan:

(1) The most predominate factor that greatly reduced operations was lack of available VHF channels employed to control flights in the objective area. The four (4) VHF channels were constantly overcrowded by the number of support aircraft and controllers operating in the area.

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(2) The lack of coordination in the scheduling of flights over the target area resulted in confusion and in many instances long delays. It was necessary at times to assign a secondary target on which to jettison bomb load, due to limited time available over the target.

(3) Flights experienced poor to unsatisfactory communications with "Mellow Control Center." It was necessary to proceed to within ten (10) miles in order to "check in" or "out" due to the limited reception of JOC's radio equipment.

(4) A standard grid system would have aided in the location of targets. It was apparent that both services were using nothing more than standard aeronautical chart (scale 1 - 1,000,000).

2. The following comments apply to the Inchon landings:

a. Factors favorable in effecting operations:

(1) The reporting in and out system employed was very effective and greatly minimized congestion and delay in report to assigned areas.

(2) The method used in assigning targets and close support missions were well coordinated and accurately disseminated to the incoming flights.

(3) Target assignments were consistent with loedings allowing for maximum effectiveness. This factor was particularly noticeable and encouraged the pilots to exort maximum effici- on each mission.

(4) The grid system employed during this operation was very effective and resulted in pin point identification of targets.

b. Unfavorable comments:

(1) The grid system used during Inchon support was excellent, however, it is recommended that the grid maps be printed on smaller sheets to be used in the cockpit. The large sheets were bulky and often very unhandy.

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(2) Close air support missions and gun fire support often were intergrated during the same period causing unnecessary risks and danger. There were two (2) instances in which gunfire support was conducted during and on the same target; thus causing decreased efficiency of the support aircraft due to emphasis on look out precautions.

(3) In comparing the operations conducted at both the Inchon and Pusan areas, it was very noticeable that there was a definite lack of over all control and scheduling during the Pusan operation.

c. Recommendations:

(1) That a standard grid system be employed for both Air Force and Navy support work.

(2) That greater emphasis be placed in giving pilots the latest accurate information and briefing on the position of the current bombline.

(3) That more training be given to new pilots in close air support tactics and target identification.

(4) That more VHF channels be used for close air support missions.

(5) That Control Centers be given more adequate communications equipment.

W.R. PITTMAN

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(Enclosure (4) to CAG-5
Conf. ser 073-50)

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UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
AIR FORCE
FIGHTER SQUADRON FIFTY FOUR
c/o FPO, San Francisco, Calif.

VF54:CRJ:hs
A16
Ser: 511-50
26 OCT 1950

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MEMORANDUM

From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FIFTY FOUR
To: Commander Carrier Air Group FIVE

Subj: Close Air Support

Ref: (a) CCVG-5 Memo of 21 October 1950

1. In compliance with reference (a), comments on the Close Air Support in the Pusan and Inchon areas are submitted herewith. Operational procedures are discussed on a comparitive basis.

A. Planning

1. All close support missions in the Pusan area were primarily "call strike" missions, whereas the Inchon area flights were scheduled in accordance with a promulgated operation order.

B. Charts.

1. No close support charts of the Pusan defense perimeter were made available to pilots in this squadron. For this reason no targets could be pin pointed by use of target coordinates alone. Only a general area, such as a village, could be designated by name or by latitude and longitude. In all cases of a pin point target the flight had to be shown the target by a T.A.C.

At Inchon, close support charts were available which enabled flights to strike pin point targets outside the bomb line without the services of a T.A.C.

C. Target Information.

1. At Pusan there were generally no predetermined targets to attack in the event contact was not made with T.A.D.C. or a T.A.C. However, at Inchon, pilots were thoroughly briefed on

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road sweeps which were used as alternate targets for flights that were not assigned a close support mission.

D. Bomb Line.

1. Daily and accurate bomb line information in the Pusan area was generally available to pilots prior to launch. Bomb line information in the Inchon area was usually vague because of the rapid progress made by friendly forces.

E. R.I.O. Procedures.

1. At Pusan flights frequently could not report to the T.A.C.C. without proceeding directly over its geographic location. As a result, flight leaders, because of limited time on station, had to by pass the T.A.C.C. and report to any available T.A.C. for target assignment. This prevented the T.A.C.C. from having complete positive control of all aircraft in the area.

2. Terrain features and use of emergency equipment by the T.A.C.C. is considered to be the main cause of the R.I.O. failures at Pusan.

3. At Inchon R.I.O. control was rigidly controlled and communications were very good. However, when the T.A.C.C. was established ashore, both the T.A.C.C. and the T.A.D.C. required R.I.O. on the same channel, resulting in confusion and increased traffic on an already overloaded channel.

F. Target Designation and Controllers.

1. Controllers at Pusan were Air Force air and ground controllers. Pin pointing of targets was difficult due to lack of charts common to Air Force and Navy. Air Force controllers usually had too many flights to control with the result that it took entirely to much time to brief one flight on a target's location. Often, flights of propeller aircraft would have to stand by while jet aircraft were briefed on the target and completed their attack.

2. At Inchon Marine controllers could easily pin point targets by use of gridded charts and pilots experienced no difficulty in locating assigned targets. Flights reporting on station were without undue delay when close support targets were not available.

G. Armament.

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1. Specified armament loads, designated by code name to facilitate reporting and target assignments were used at Inchon, but not at Pusan. It is considered that the NAPALM bombs, MK66, used were inaccura e and generally ineffective. The considered optimum Corsair loading for general purpose targets is the 1000 lb. GP bomb with VT nose fusing and inst. or .025 second delay tail fusing, together with a wing load of four (4) 100 lb. GP bombs inst. fused or four (4) HVAR's.

2. In summation, it is considered that the following items were weak points in the Inchon and Pusan operations, and improvement is desired:

(a) VHF Radio Equipment.

1. Adequate channels common to both Air Force and Navy.

2. Ground radio equipment should have added range and reliability.

(b) Grid Charts.

1. Grid charts common to all services and available for all operations.

(c) R.I.O. Procedures.

1. Standardized R/T vocabulary and procedure for both Air Force and Navy.

2. Either T.A.D.C. or T.A.C.C. control, with no overlapping of functions or control.

(d) Armament.

1. Continued study on optimum loadings, particularly proper fusing.

D. K. ENGLISH

(Enclosure (5) to CAG-5 Conf.
Ser. 073-50)

VA55:OP:jd
A16-3
26 OCT 1950

(Enclosure (5) to CAG-5
Conf. ser 073-50 Cont'd)

MEMORANDUM DECLASSIFIED

From: Commanding Officer, Attack Squadron FIFTY FIVE
To: Commander Carrier Air Group FIVE

Subj: Close Air Support in the Pusan and Inchon Beachheads; comments concerning

Ref: (a) CCVG-5 memo of 21 Oct 1950

1. In compliance with reference (a) the following are this squadron's comments concerning the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of close air support in subject areas:

a. Pusan area:

(1) Liaison: Seemed to be lacking on the higher levels. In most instances it was not known where front lines were. This information came in very slowly and was uncertain.

(2) Coordination and scheduling was lacking in most instances. It was seldom known whether a flight was to be close air support or armed reconnaissance from one day to the next. There seemed to be no scheduling of Navy flights over any one particular area or target. There was no central orbit points to hold flights away from the target area until called for, thus an area would have many aircraft for a while and then when the flights had to return to base the TAC would be completely without. Frequently Navy flights would be held orbiting a target while Air Force F-51's were called in from other areas.

(3) JOC and TADC: In most instances the reception of instructions from the JOC and TADC was extremely weak necessitating flying directly over the station to obtain desired reception. The number of radio channels available to the JOC and TADC was limited to four, consequently they were always crowded and in may instances reception was completely blanked out.

(4) Flights: The actual number of flights launched flew close air support because there were no secondary targets assigned by the ship and the TADC did not have any secondary targets to assign. Consequently the flight, after contacting either the TADC or TAC, was on target only a relatively short time. This seems to be an ideal situation, however the scheduling of these flights was such that many support flights left the target area at the same time. The loading for these flights was unusually light when compared with the normal loading usually carried. This was due primarily to the long distance between the target area and the carrier force, normally between 150 and 200 miles.

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(5) Charts: The charts used by the Navy in this phase of close air support were the normal air navigation charts while the Air Force was using a gridded chart that we did not have. It was necessary to cause the TADC or TAC to repeat messages of location using latitudes and longitudes in order to locate the geographic sector where the support was needed.

(6) Targets selected: In many instances the targets selected were never actually sighted by the flight leader. It was necessary for the flight to expend external ordnance loads on areas and towns on the order of the TAC whether or not he had actually seen military targets.

(7) Front lines: In many instances the exact knowledge of where the front lines were was not known. There appeared to be little use made of marker panels, a necessity if pilots are not to attack friendly troops.

b. Inchon area:

(1) Liaison: The close air support rendered at Inchon was well planned in advance so that it was known by all concerned exactly how it was to be done.

(2) Coordination and scheduling: Coordination was handled through operations plans and various operations orders, consequently even the pilots knew what to expect from TADC. By Air Operations Orders, squadrons were aware of both primary and secondary missions which were planned well in advance. In scheduling flights, the flight leaders were briefed on secondary targets as well as for close air support. In all instances missions were carried out with a minimum delay.

(3) JOC and TADC: In every instance instructions were received from the TADC with little or no interference, thus enabling the flight to proceed on the mission assigned with little or no delay. The TADC had available to him 10 radio channels so that flights rendering support would not interfere with the reporting in and out net. With the large number of flights reporting in and out with the TADC, this net at times was crowded but that was the exception. Prior to a flight being assigned a secondary mission, a specific channel was assigned them. On a few occasions more than one flight was on one channel thus crowding it. However prior to the TADC moving ashore, communications were excellent.

(4) Flights: The number of flights of this squadron utilized in actual close air support was comparatively few, however normally the flights so utilized were able to stay in the target area a much longer time and were able to carry considerable more ordnance than those in the Pusan area. This enabled the air controller to pick out targets of more value than heretofore.

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(5) Charts: The charts and maps used by the flight leaders and the air controllers were standardized so that targets could be given by coordinates, thus targets were located by the flight leaders quite rapidly.

(6) Front lines: Due to the small but compact area of the front lines, the problem of distinguishing targets close to and beyond the front lines was controlled completely by the TACP. Also panel markings were utilized when flights were assigned secondary missions.

2. The following are recommendations for the remedial action concerning the above criticisms:

a. The standardization of such items as training, communications phraseology, radio equipment, charts, weapons and even aviation fuels would accomplish much toward eliminating most of the above discrepancies.

(1) It would be advantageous to all services to train together for the mission of close air support. The good points of the three air services could be exploited so that one close air support doctrine would be the end result. Each of the service components would be aware of the capabilities and limitations of the others in all respects.

b. It is necessary that intelligence flows steadily between the Air Force, Army and Navy in order to perform close air support effectively. The last minute positions of friendly and enemy troops is a necessity along with known intentions, capabilities and limitations. This information would permit the scheduling of close air support flights to remain over the target area continuously.

c. The assignment to a ship or air group, of a shore tactical air controller fully equipped to handle all close support flights regardless of the origin of the flight.

N. D. HODSON